## Czech Crisis Belabors

By RAY LOYND

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HOLLYWOOD - Hollywood went to Prague seven months ago to make a movie about World War II called "The Bridge at Remagen." David L. Wolper, producing his second consecutive war film for United Artists, paid \$750,000 and Czech distribution rights to Barrandov Studios in return for Czech labor and facilities.

American designers and a Czech engineering firm labored through the spring on a replica of the bridge over which GIs stormed the Rhine in March 1945, and on the first Monday in June director John Guillermin rolled his cameras. The stars-George Segal, Robert Vaughn, Ben Gazzara and Bradford Dillman-stuffed cotton in their ears, sighted their weapons and the show was on the road, another jolt forward in international film-making, another exploration by Hollywood into east European territory.

The first U.S. film ever scheduled entirely for production in Czechoslovakia, the project was accidentally but beautifully timed with the rising fortunes of Alexander Dubcek's liberal regime. It also followed on the heels of other major U.S. film productions behind the Iron Curtain-MGM's "The Fixer," shot last winter from Budapest, and Columbia's "Castle Keep," made early this year in Yugoslavia. These productions, plus others from western Europe were rapidly dispelling suspicions about working behind the iron curtain.

BOGEYMAN STUFF

But almost from the start, as the original production manager took ill and the first assistant director quit in a huff, "The Bridge at Remagen" appeared jinxed. The production also ran inte hidden costs and other frustrations that don't always make filming in Europe the relatively inexpensive journey it set out to be.

When Warsaw Pact troops invaded the country, Hollywood, the West. Left behind were cam- crewmen and the 60 some robe, the costly Remagen Bridge, and enough armor to much of it rented by Wolper from the Austrian government, cans in the first place: eight M-24 tanks, half tracks, armored cars, 21/2-ton trucks, six Jeeps and whatever was left after some 60 shooting days of 200,000 rounds of ammo and 22,000

The all-important film in the hit 'em. can had been routinely shipped to Technicolor London, but one of the actors, Gazzara (who fled with his wife, actress Janice Rule), remarked after arriving. in Vienna that "we left four days ple, but on the set they simply of film back there because we didn't want to run the risk of losing it in a check at the border. The Russians may have thought it was newsreel. But the film in in great hands."

CZECHS 'GREAT'

"Great" was the only word the American cast and crew could use to describe the Czechs they left behind. But during the trying days of filming in June and July, when the Czech and American crews were struggling to adjust to each other's work habits, there were plenty of frustrations, particularly for the Americans, who were fighting a budget, a calendar and what director Guillermin admitted was "a slowness, a lack of incentive" on the party of many of the Czech crew. The property master on the film, Don Nunley, illustrated this frustration as well as anyone when he told a reporter visiting the set last month, "I have 14 men under me, but I have never seen more than four of them at any

Approved For Refease 2005 of 15 3 CIA RDH 88 -023 FAR 0003000300030009-5 and he comes back with a box of yellow matches. And some

"The Bridge at Remagen," however lamentable its tempoafter sweating out a day and a rary breakup in the context night inside Prague's Interna- of tragic events, was not extional Hotel, grabbed its pass- actly a ballet in movement beport and underwear and fled to tween the company's 200 Czech driver banged on the hotel door eras, props, interior sets, sound crewmen from the West. Hank equipment a World War II ward- Wynands, a construction coordinator from Hollywood who supervised the elaborate mockwage a small counteroffensive, up of the Remagen Bridge on the Voltava River south of Prague, noted early in August which got it from the Ameri-||that "not too many Czechs understand instantaneous movement. Everything is planned movement, a nail will be driven in the floor of the bridge tower at 10 a.m. Monday, that sort of thing. When we throw 'em a pounds of large and small arms. curve, they don't know what

"They were suspicious of us in the beginning, and there was some friction, but that slowly ebbed away. Now the Czechs are wonderful, we love the peo-

don't jump like we're used to." Czechoslovakia, Franz Kafka's homeland, seemed forever to throw clusive and uncanny Kafka-like obstacles in the way the last man to cross an open of the filmmakers. As a result drawbridge, had taken a routine of the East German propaganda in June and July, charg- early in the evening before the ing that the film company was invasion. It turned out to be the a skillful coverup for "CIA in last.
terventionists." the Czech MAD SCRAMBLE key, the hundreds of rifles, ma-the majority left clothes and running M-24 tanks, that disap-in their rooms at the park hotel. another repair truck. And one his notes for his Ph.D. dissertamorning in June, while the in the town of Most about 10 miles from the East German border, a Czech explosives exa pert demanded that he be allowed to work independently. "I'm the best demolition man. in Czechoslovakia," he told the

Americans, pointing at dyna-

So much for history before the biggest Kafka nightmare of all occurred early in the morning of Aug. 21 when a Czech of actor Dillman at 5 a.m. and yelled "the Russians have invaded!" Two hours later, Dillman, Robert Vaughn and Vaughn's secretary, Sharon Miller, were across town at the company's headquarters at the International Hotel, built originally as the Czech War Ministry until some Russian turned it into a tourist hotel. The hotel, standing vulnerably in front of Czech army barracks, was ringed by Soviet tanks. The cast and crew, some 70 in all counting a handful of wives and children, sat the day out in the hotel lobby while hotel management passed out food and beer (warning against double help-

The story of the departure is the stuff of pulp-magazine fiction. Unknown apparently to the invaders was a Telex in the film company's headquarters tapping out cables to Wolper's office here. Wolper himself, like flight from Prague to Rome

army put the entire "Rema- In the scramble among cast gen" arsenal under lock and and crew to get out of Prague, chine guns, explosives and so other effects behind. Vaughn on. There was also the repair and his secretary each left four truck, used to fix the delicate-suitcases and a steamer trunk peared when needed to repair Ditto Dillman. Vaughn also left tion, "The Influence of the crew was blowing off charges House Un-American Activities

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